

by pyrocitor

Summary: Upon the arrival of vikings in Scotland, Merida feels that the threat of imminent danger couldn't get any worse. Then she finds out they have dragons. Yet, she still finds a way to connect with one of the strangers.

I'll be updating this every few days. It's a piece I wrote a long while ago, so I'm basically rewriting each chapter as I've improved since then. However I only made it halfway through chapter 4 before I gave it up. So come chapter 4, please be prepared for the chapters to be up a little later.

## A Modern Myth

Merida twisted around under the sheets, to face a irradiated beam of light illuminating her face. Her claymore - which she'd left in an optimised position leaning against the bedstead - reflected the moonlight ostentatiously and flooded the entire room in a silvery glow. In particular, the awe-inspiring tapestry her mother had crafted was explicitly visible in the pale glare, and still it hung on the wall next to her fire-place. As well as reminding her of the journey that she and Elinor had wandered collectively, it also made her doubtlessly wary of her previous attitude. Selfish, rash, stubborn - she'd taken those words straight from her mother's lips. But despite the memories floating around in her mind - there was little else the girl wanted now, but sleep. It surely wasn't too much to request, it was even still dark - despite the obtrusive gleam keeping her eyes active. Though, after a few minutes of silence, thunder cracked in the distance and Angus, the Princess' sturdy horse, whinnied outside in fear.

"Angus!" She shouted at him in response, turning her body away from the window. Her voice then shifted into a whisper and she grumbled through lack of slumber; "Shut it, ya wee baby." She was extremely tempted to get up solely for the purpose of shutting him up, in one of the many different scenarios running through her head currently.

However, the creature continued. Sighing, and heaving herself upwards, Merida tore the bed covers away from her, the cold of the room hitting her like a sword to the face. She stood still, shielding her eyes from the light and waiting for her body to adjust to the sudden change, swaying slightly from the rapid movements.

"I'll be beltin' ya if no other doesnae do it." She moaned under her breath while pulling on a plainly coloured, simple garb and comfortable black shoes. Then, silently as possible in shoes on stone, moved towards the heavy wooden door and grabbed the hooded cloak draped over the back of her chair, afterwards then grasping her bow and quiver from the lid of a chest, which sat at the foot of her bed. She then made her way through the maze that was Castle Dunbroch, and upon reaching the kitchen, found that Maudie was asleep in a chair. It was obvious she'd fallen into slumber while getting breakfast ready, so there was less to do in the morning. Merida chuckled and unlocked the door as silently as she could - opening it, however, was a different matter. Due to the wind, it swung open violently, turned over to smash against the castle's stone walls. She winced, but was fortunate it hadn't woken the kitchen maid; she'd only scream if it had. Gladly, the Princess shut the door behind her and made her way down to the stables.

"Easy lad; there's nay monster, it's tha wind, ya cuddie." She patted his neck tenderly, the wind ripping through his mane wildly to whip her in the cheek, it was irritating, but she was used to this kind of affair. She then secured her weapons and mounted the beast, urging him into a trot until the portcullis at the base of the castle stood before her. One of the guards called from above.

"Who goes thar?" He cried to her. Merida knew that he was doing his job - but it was pointless sounding so aggressive when she was already within the castle walls, logic dictated that she wasn't a threat.

"Jus' open the gate before I run ya through!" She retaliated, equally as combative. The guard immediately apologised then, obviously recognising the voice of his Princess, and rushed along the stone walls to raise the gate for her. Goading Angus forward, both horse and rider charged from the keep and onto the stone bridge which lead to the unforgiving Scottish wilderness; trepidation emerging in the corner of her mind. If her mother found out about this - which she probably would - there could be disastrous consequences. The thunder resonated across the valley once more, louder, and more pronounced in this second time. Curious, the redhead lifted her gaze towards the sky, but it was clear and cloudless - stars untouched by nought but black.

\_\_Wha's up with that?\_\_ She pondered nonchalantly, allowing her thoughts to stray unrestrained. Though, her hands still wavered over the labyrinth of intricate carvings that spread across the length of the bow's limb. Despite the crystal night and silent surroundings - she couldn't afford to let her guard falter, and the concept brought

her staggering back to normality from the complex system of her mind. As Angus slowed, Merida's eyes roamed the scenery before her, appreciating that the steed had brought her, without guidance once more, to the ring of stones: a place of great zest and anguish to her family. The collapsed pillar had been reinstated to its previous post, and the demon bear Mor'du's head now hung as a fearsome ornament in DunBroch's great hall. A wry smile grew on her lips at the memories, but she felt it urgent to press forward before any more began to burden her mind - less cordial recollections - her heels pressed on the Clydesdale's ribcage and spurred him onwards, leading him to the plains that sat below the Crone's Tooth and Fire Falls, overlooking one of the kingdom's many valleys.

"Birds?" She spoke aloud, unsure of the silhouettes that blackened the already dim night sky. At a further distance; maybe they would have appeared to be birds, but Merida knew more than to deny the existence of the supernatural. Whatever the bizarre shapes were, they were ascending rapidly and the girl felt her heart pounding vigorously in her chest. "Le's go, Angus." She murmured, leaning ahead in her saddle to play with the horse's ears for a free moment while spying a few last glances at the creatures. Her father, while he would be sullen about her midnight journey, must be informed about this event - if their home was in danger, surely he could overlook a few rebellious actions. At this, she pressed on the reins, shifting the body beneath her into the direction she desired: before willing him forward with a few sweet utterances and a touch on his sides.

## 2. Chapter 1: A Date With Fate

Thanks for sticking with me; the next chapter won't take so long, I promise. It's the first week the uni term, and it's been a bit hectic.

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><p><span><strong>Chapter I<strong>  
><em>Can't Stop, I've a Date With Fate<em>

As the wilderness fell apart from around the pair, and the glowing lights of home came into view - endless amounts of scenarios were playing out within the redhead's mind. She had little faults about the defence of the castle; it was extremely well guarded, and the walls could not be easily scaled. But in the case of giant birds (as she so eloquently put them) - she doubted that the comfort of colossal walls would be of little satisfaction to her, or any of the others living within the keep. Crossing the stone bridge for the second time this morning, she found herself with furrowed brows as the keep gate was shut, with no guards around to watch or man it.

"Jings, crivvens." She muttered under her breath, worry and desperation beginning to catch a hold of her. She cast her gaze around the fortification's gangway; swearing again when no man seemed to be in sight. Though, after a long few minutes, the hazy figure of militia came into view through the morning fog. He shifted, changing over the torch in his hands before the Princess called out. "Let me through." She commanded him, the last thing she wished to be doing at the moment was wasting time with a marred fool: "Open the gate, ya

gammy bassa!" She belted through the dewy mist, throwing her insults to him without a second thought; as she usually did with men who dared (or bothered) to block her way.

"Wha' kind o' language is tha' fer a young lass?" He responded, a light-heartedness glistening his words like lace through silk. Merida would have found the statement somewhat endearing had she not been so restless. Immediately, she pulled her bow from around her slight shoulders and nocked an arrow into place. She needn't say anymore, and it wasn't as if she wished to - only returned the weapons to their previous position as the guard paced away, calling through the night to his comrades. It still took far too long than what was to be expected, but despite their dreariness, the men drew together long enough for the portcullis to be raised. And as soon as Merida noticed Angus could lurch under the metal - she coaxed him onwards with more zeal than she realised her body could account for. Now making no attempt to be silent, she pressed her steed on to the pantry doors, knowing they would be open, diving into the wooden door when she reached it.

Screaming her father's name, she charged through the castle in the direction of her parents' abode, slamming straight into his chest a few metres from the door. "Dad!" She cheered, continuing on. Making no notice of his scarred face glaring down at her. "Ah was out, by the Crone's Tooth, Ah know - I shouldnae be out this time - bu' there's somethin' out thear, Dad. There's really somethin'..." Her voice trailed away as her eyes finally made the path to her father's current disposition.

"Yer better hahve a good reason fer wakin' me ap." A near-naked Fergus, who'd been holding a fierce-looking two-handed claymore, passed the piece of steel over to his wife, who had been stood behind him, probably since they'd both been awakened. The woman twisted it in her hands, then moved away and disappeared into the room behind her. Her daughter's eyes following her movements until they could no longer see her; her gaze shifted back to her father.

"Dad, listen." She began, drawing a deep breath. "Ah was out, by the Crone's Tooth-" Her father lifted a hand, interrupting her.

"Ye were out?!" He bellowed, enormous frame seemingly growing even larger by the second, only, Elinor had returned and placed a hand onto her husband's shoulder to placate the man; at least she seemed to realise Merida would not wake them for nothing.

A slight sigh of relief fell from the girls lips, and she repeated her movements before - taking a breath. "Birds... Giant birds." Her mouth began to move once more, a vivid array of hand gestures to accompany her narrative. "Way too big to be from 'round here." Her father gave her a look of derision. "An' thear was the sound o' thunder - though, no clouds... Or, or rain." Fergus's expression now bordered on mockery - growling, Merida scoffed, her chin lifting up towards her father. "Go check yo'self if you think I'm lyin'." She wasn't to be taken for a fool; not again. The Scotsman uttered a grunt of opposition, but slithered away from her and moved to the bedroom window anyway. "Wha' do'ye see?" She called out after him, anxiously glancing to her mother who had now settled in the rocking chair on the far side of the room. The woman also had her eyes to the glass framework of the window, a solicitous and impatient leer set within her gaze. "Mum..."

Elinor's scrutinous gaze instantly went to her daughter. She answered her, however, only with a small coherent hum, her eyebrows raising slightly, awaiting an answer from her husband's booming voice to break the uncomfortable silence that had settled over the three.

"Birds, ye say?" He asked her, while picking up various pieces of clothing, and pulling them onto his body. Merida nodded at him, watching as he grabbed a scabbard for his sword and pulled the belt tight around him before finding the weapon itself and slotting it into place. "Come on, lass." He moved then, aiming for the door, signalling for her to follow. With one last glimpse, she gave a gracious look and another smile to her mother before starting after her father, who had already woken the rest of the castle with his shouting.

She decided to ignore all the noise, however, and hastily made her way back outside: either her father saw too much in her, or she saw too much in herself. But cautiousness and vigilance hurt no-one, 'cept slumber. Though, she soon began to despise Fergus' decision of waking the rest of the keep, as all she saw upon reaching the cold terrain outside the castle doors was the weary faces of the DunBroch military. Had her father roused every soldier of the kingdom from their sleep? It damned well seemed like that was the case and the girl sighed, exasperated; pushing her way through the crowd to get to Angus, who had already wandered back to his stall. There was a lithe soldier stood by him, checking his legs - it was easy prey for a man when a horse was ready and saddled, but he moved away instantly when the princess drew near, shooting her a quick salute before dissolving into the crowd. She watched the man until she could no longer see his figure, and mounted her horse when she was sure he was gone; even the family's own men sometimes could not be trusted. Her father then appeared, standing at the head of the steps in front of the castle. He spoke to the mob of men before dispersing a number of them into several scouting groups, and while he had, Merida had readied herself and was patiently waiting atop Angus.

"You're nay goin' out." She heard a heavy voice from behind her. "Leave it tae tha men." She found now that it was her father, as he'd walked forward and taken a hold of her ride's reins while he was speaking.

"Dad!" She cried, refusing to dismount.

"Nay; you're stayin'. Tha's ma final word." He said no more, then headed to the great hall where the rest of the soldiers were anxiously awaiting edict from their leader. But parental consent had never deterred her before, and in an event like this, she certainly wasn't waiting around when she could be aiding the men. So despite her father's wishes, and how much she usually seemed to respect them, she couldn't bring herself to stand down this time. With a spur, Angus lurched forward into a fast-paced canter as she headed to the gate before it was closed, pulling the hood of her cloak over her head. The material of the clothing was much more than the military were given, and it only slightly resembled their black, plain garbs - but in the morning mist, and at speed, it would be mistaken.

It was then when she heard the noise once more. The deep, rumbling thunder that had terrified Angus and woken her earlier in the night.

However, this time, it sounded constant; fixed, even. Not like before when it reverberated across the early morning sky. Angus skidded to halt himself, prancing on the spot, forcing almost all of the princess' strength to hold him steady. And once he was calm again, she looked about her. Where precisely had the sound originated from, if it was close enough to startle the horse? Lost in thought, she hadn't noticed the small blue apparition appear underneath her, though Angus did, and in his agitation, she almost lost her balance.

"Angus!" She cried at him, venom pouring out of her and into her voice; he never usually acted so restless, especially when mounted by his fearless owner, and when he wouldn't still himself, Merida knew she had little choice but to push him onwards to tire him. About to do so, it was then that she saw them; only after looking up to let her eyes settle on the landscape in front of them. But by then, the horse below her was already charging ahead. "Wisps?" She whispered, leaning forward and pressed lower into the saddle - had the wisps not finished with her yet? What more could they possibly throw at her; the incident with her mother had been enough, and she knew that she couldn't take another event of such a scale. Yet still, she followed them, stubbornness and curiosity leading her along, disappearing after she'd been taken over several hillocks and into a large rock formation which stood at the base of a rather large (and incredibly steep) cliff.

"Wha-" She started to speak, amazed and irritated that they'd pulled her so far from the forest to pointlessly bring her to an empty hollow. She dismounted Angus and walked forward to press her hand a large stone: apart from being freezing cold - which she'd expected so early in the year - there was nothing extraordinary about it.

\*\*\*"Heil."\*\*\* A voice echoed, passing her and resounding through the formation. Merida instantly jumped back, sparing a few seconds to ready her bow. A place like this was perfect for an ambush, and she cursed herself for being stupid enough to come alone - with sounds ringing throughout the compilation of rocks; it seemed impossible to pinpoint the location of the source.

"Who's there?" She stammered, her eyes whipping around in the foggy gloom. \_Wait.. Was that?\_ She squinted, noticed a slight flickering of colour on her right, behind another large boulder. "Is there anyone there?" She continued, her voice less fearful this time. Suddenly; movement. Shadows moving, and a large one at that. Now she knew she wasn't going crazy. She took a few steps towards the murkiness before a voice cut her to a halt.

\*\*\*"Hrafnarnir munu hafa Álfrik!"\*\*\*

Looking up, all Merida could make out was darkness descending upon her with the speed and ferocity of a wildcat. She dived to her right and out of harm's way, her bow loosening from her grip and falling to the grass beside her; but the figure continued to shout, wildly swinging a weapon and marching on her opponent. The princess reached to her side and scrambled for her bow, nocking the arrow back onto the string and pulling it tight as her adversary pulled her weapon into the air, ready to strike her down. Peace fell upon the pair for a few seconds, the only noise cutting the serenity being their haggard breaths.

It was Merida who broke it: "Who are you?" She asked the person, who had their hands on the handle of a nasty looking axe, balancing above their head, ready to go into her enemy's gut.

\*\*\*"Ek skil eigi..."\*\* Was the reply, but based on the way it was spoken, Merida hardly believed it was the name of the adversary. Narrowing her eyes, she pulled the arrow from the string of her bow, and slowly replaced it back into the quiver. After this, she took her time to stand, as not to startle the stranger. But once she was stood, she made sure to keep her weapon in her hand - she wasn't taking any chances. Fortunately, her actions seemed to have paid off, as the newcomer had backed away from her and dropped her own weapon to her side.

"You ain't from 'round here, are ya?" The redhead spoke quietly, finally able to get a decent view of the person in front of her: she appeared tall enough, but not much higher than the princess herself, fair hair pulled back and out of her face, heavy, leather clothing mixed with thin, metal armour. She definitely wasn't from the Kingdom, all the Scottish warriors chose to wear seemed to be light leathers and kilts. Merida weighed the situation in her head; she couldn't speak much without confusing the girl. So she chose for the most basic actions in order to communicate. She took her free hand and gestured to herself; "Merida." She spoke, emphasizing each syllable. Then, she shifted her hands to gesture to the stranger. The girl looked at her as if she'd just chopped her own arm off, and Merida repeated the movements a few times until it looked as though the warrior understood.

Finally, she replied. "Astrid."

Merida nodded, smiling. It was a start, at least.

End  
file.